



# San Diego City Attorney **MICHAEL J. AGUIRRE**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **NEWS MEDIA AND PUBLIC ADVISED TO TAKE NOTE OF *UNION-TRIBUNE* RETRACTION TO AGUIRRE EDITORIAL**

**San Diego, CA**—The *San Diego Union –Tribune (UT)* editorial headline boldly stated, “Ethical breach—Aguirre violates law on contributions from staff.” The *U-T* editorial board had also pushed for the removal of the duly elected City Attorney. There was only one problem. The *U-T* got it wrong!

After being advised of its error, and with little fanfare, the *U-T* published a retraction and clarification on October 31. Placed on the “Letters to the Editor” page, the retraction, printed in a smaller font size than the original editorial, was located under the heading entitled “**For The Record**” and buried on the U-T Editorial page.

“The reason I am pointing out the retraction is because it was either ignored or not noticed by other news media that lifted the original story from the *U-T*,” said City Attorney Michael Aguirre. “Do you think the public had the same problem?”

Published on Wednesday, October 10, the editorial alleged that City Attorney Michael Aguirre had violated a “sweeping prohibition” contained in the San Diego City Charter by accepting campaign contributions from some of his top staffers. However, the premise was wrong.

The retraction read:

An Oct. 10 editorial referenced a 1931 San Diego Charter provision that prohibits city employees from soliciting or accepting campaign donations from subordinates or other city employees. The editorial noted that state law and the municipal code allow for the acceptance of unsolicited campaign contributions. Pursuant to the California Government Code, state law supersedes the charter on this subject. The headline incorrectly stated that Aguirre violated the law on contributions from staff. The editorial also noted that Deputy City Attorneys Kathryn Burton, Don McGrath, Karen Heumann, John Serrano and Walter Chung contributed to City Attorney Aguirre's campaign and all received pay increases shortly thereafter. As clarification, the editorial did not state that any of these individuals violated the law by making these contributions. The Union-Tribune regrets the error.

The City Attorney also finds the clarification contained in the statement insufficient, as it implied wrongdoing by deputy city attorneys and ignored the fact that it harmed their reputations by baseless innuendo.

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